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Teaching the Renaissance in China: Limitations and Qualifications



Fig. 1: Tsinghua University, Grand Auditorium

Renaissance teaching in China is barely a noticeable activity. This is largely the result of the uneasy development of China's universities. While many European universities have a venerable history dating back to the Middle Ages, modern universities began to emerge in China only in the late nineteenth century. Last year, Tsinghua University, one of the nation's prime institutions of higher learning, celebrated its centennial, an event coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the Revolution of 1911. During this past century, China has gone through the most dramatic changes in her history, whereas similar changes took some 300 years to com-

plete in Europe.[1] The Chinese people had to endure decades of political and intellectual disorder, and the situation was greatly aggravated by fierce aggression from the outside. All of these have conditioned the existence and development of China's universities.

Tsinghua University: Foundation and Flourish of Humanities

Tsinghua University's campus architecture displays a markedly Western style. To the trained eye, the centrally planned Grand Auditorium (fig.

1), with its pedimented temple front articulated by an Ionic order, immediately evokes the Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio's most renowned work: Villa Rotunda.[2] The origin of the University has indeed a Western connection. It was founded in 1911 on the site of a Qing Dynasty royal garden called the "Tsinghua Garden". The majority of the funds came from the Boxer Rebellion Indemnity, which was paid excessively to the United States and, after complex negotiations, partly returned to China as scholarship for Chinese students to study in the United States.[3] Tsinghua thus began to function as a preparatory school for those students sent by the government to the U.S., and its official name at the time was Tsinghua Imperial College. The 1920s saw subsequent establishments of undergraduate and graduate programs at Tsinghua, and its name was changed to National Tsinghua University.

Tsinghua University also had a thriving beginning in the humanities. Four scholars contributed to the resonant legend of Tsinghua's early history: the versatile poet Wang Guowei (1877-1927); the philologist Chen Yinke (1890-1969); Zhao Yuanren (1892-1982), "Father of the Modern Study of Chinese Phonology", and Liang Qichao (1873-1929), journalist, philosopher, and resolute reformist. Wang contributed significantly to the studies of ancient history, archaeology, epigraphy, philology, vernacular literature and literary theory, and was instrumental in fusing Eastern and Western aesthetics; Chen became a fellow of the Academia Sinica; Zhao was an amateur composer, while Liang inspired numerous Chinese scholars with his writings. They were among China's greatest and most forward-looking thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. All four scholars sojourned abroad for education or business.[4] In 1925, they were appointed Supervisors at the newly founded Research Institute of Sinology Studies, Tsinghua Imperial College. Venerated as the "Four Great Mentors", they designed a rigorous curriculum combining the classical Chinese educational system and Western humanities.

These intellectuals pursued their oversea education at a critical moment in the history of twentieth-century China. In the decades immediately following the Revolution of 1911, which overthrew the last monarchy and attempted to establish a Republic, democratic ideas spread across China. Many young students went abroad, aspiring to learn from the West to serve their own nation. Exposed to Western thought for the first time and at their most impressionable age, they came to regard the concepts of the Renaissance as a powerful contribution of Western civilization which brought about a flowering of art, literature, science, politics, and an emancipatory way of relating to the past. Profoundly inspired, these young scholars began to reflect upon China's own possible "renaissance". It is particularly noteworthy that the New Culture and May Fourth Movements (1915-1921), initiated by enlightened intellectuals, are sometimes referred to as the "Chinese Renaissance", since during this era there was an intense focus on science and experimentation.

Besides the Four Great Mentors, other distinguished intellectuals who studied abroad include Fu Lei, the famous translator who studied art and art theory in France, Zhu Ziqing, a renowned poet and essayist who studied English literature and linguistics in London, and Liang Sicheng (the eldest son of Liang Qichao), "father of modern Chinese architecture" who received a sound training at University of Pennsylvania and traveled to Europe to investigate historical buildings. Upon their return to China, both Zhu and Liang taught at Tsinghua University, while Fu taught in Shanghai.[5] Zhu's anthology, *A Journey through Europe*, was published in 1934. His admirable descriptions of the cultural and physical landscape of the birthplace of the Renaissance as seen through Asian eyes, together with his ingenious transformation of the word "Firenze" into Chinese characters, fired the imagination of his peers and students, and cast a spell on those who never visited Italy.

Institutional Restructuring and the Central Academy of Arts and Design

Significantly, at least in universities in mainland China, there has never been a teaching position reserved particularly for Renaissance scholars. There are two reasons why this is the case. The first is historical. In 1937, the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan disturbed the normal activities in Chinese universities and colleges. That year, Tsinghua University, Peking University, and Nankai University merged and relocated to Kunming, Yunnan Province to form the National Southwest Associated University. After the war, the three members moved back to their original campuses and resumed their independent status. Since then, Tsinghua University has gone through some great changes caused by two nationwide events of institutional restructuring of higher education. The first one began in 1952, three years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, which changed Tsinghua's course from a well-balanced, comprehensive university to a multidisciplinary polytechnic university specializing in engineering.[6] Such focus lasted more than three decades and it was not until the end of the Cultural Revolution that Tsinghua began to strengthen its disciplines in sciences, economics, humanities, and law. The second nationwide restructuring took place in 1999, which resulted in a chain of controversial institution-merging events. That year, China's Central Academy of Arts and Design merged into Tsinghua University and became Tsinghua Academy of Arts and Design.[7]

The second reason has to do with the displacement of art history from the humanities in China's higher educational system. The study of painting – including its theory, criticism, and connoisseurship – is a long-established literati tradition in China, and was considered an integral part of the artist's intellectual life. But *meishu shi*, the Chinese equivalent for art history, is a modern word of Western construct. For the majority of Chinese teachers and students, the core of the word is *meishu*, literally meaning fine arts,

instead of *shi*, meaning chronicles or annals. In fact, the word is often used interchangeably with *meishu yanjiu*, which means art studies. And so in China art history is essentially not regarded as a branch of history or even one of cultural history. In Europe and North America, art history is a well-established, mature discipline, but in China, until very recent years, it has never been an independent scholarly discipline. An art history department, if it exists at all, is almost without exception allied with an art academy.[8] On the other hand, while in Western institutions Renaissance studies are represented in a variety of fields – art, history, literature, music, etc. –, in China the study of the Renaissance is predominantly concerned with its art. Hence art academies have become the only environment where Renaissance art is taught.

The Central Academy of Arts and Design (CAAD), the predecessor of Tsinghua Academy of Arts and Design, was established in 1956 with the approval of the State Council. The 1950s was a period of uncertainty in every respect. Radical social, political, and cultural changes that would eventually turn the world upside down in the next two decades were already unfolding in China. The Chinese Communist Party, since it was now responsible for the nation's cultural heritage, established new libraries, museums, and institutions to demonstrate its respect for historic material culture. When it came to the art education, however, socialist realism and folk arts were promoted against traditional genres. It was in this highly politicized and functionalist atmosphere that the Central Academy of Arts and Design was founded to meet the country's demand for populist artists and design professionals.[9]

Notably, while the government authorities' attitude towards China's cultural past appeared to be paradoxical and conflicted, they unequivocally denounced all things Western. Slogans like "Let the enemies (referring to the capitalist West) deteriorate day by day, while we (referring to the socialist New China) ameliorate day by day!" flared in the air. Members of the so-

cial elite, including scholars, artists, and entrepreneurs, were targeted in ceaseless political campaigns and had to endure vehement criticism for their “rotten” ideas. The intellectuals were forced to confess that they were not only politically “backward” and ideologically ignorant, but even in their scholarly pursuits they had followed the wrong path. Conceivably, to teach the Renaissance in art academies or even to mention it in a favoring tone would put the speaker in danger. Such radical cultural transformation had devastating effects on the self-esteem and spiritual calm of the intellectuals. In an independent New China, this was particularly poignant when one considers that in the 1920s and 1930s, despite the precarious condition of the nation in the hands of two vying political parties – the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Nationalist Party –, it was still possible for scholars like Fu Lei and Zhu Ziqing to lecture freely on Western art and culture.

The decade of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, a period of unprecedented turmoil, brought to a complete halt all teaching and creative activities in Central Academy of Arts and Design. It was the darkest period for Chinese intellectuals. It was not until November 1978 when Deng Xiaoping, the *de facto* leader of China following Mao’s death in 1976, initiated the opening-up policy, that higher learning institutions across China resumed their normal annual recruitment and the nation began to re-open its gate towards the West. That year, the number of students admitted to Central Academy of Arts and Design increased considerably and various efforts were made to improve, expand, and enrich the Academy’s programs. At the beginning, undergraduate programs were predominant while postgraduate supplemental, but in the 1980s, the Academy not only established a complete system of undergraduate and postgraduate programs, but also began to offer research-based Ph.D. programs.

The Central Academy of Arts and Design was the first academy of its kind in the People’s Republic of China and for nearly forty years re-

mained the nation’s only independent academy of arts and design. In April 1982, at a national conference to review the curricula of the country’s colleges and universities, the participants agreed that the curricula of the Central Academy of Arts and Design should be used by all other institutions in their art and design programs, thus consolidating its core role in the education of art and design in China. Since the Academy merged into Tsinghua University in 1999, it has been developing its programs in the educational system of a comprehensive university. Currently there are 1,157 undergraduate students and 577 postgraduates in the Academy; of the latter group, 104 students are pursuing a Doctor of Arts. In addition, there are 148 international students from 20 countries. The Academy has a large faculty comprising 60 professors, 93 associate professors, and 43 lecturers. Such statistics should be viewed in the context of China’s enormous population.

Renaissance Teaching in the Department of Art History

Today, Tsinghua Academy of Arts and Design is composed of ten departments. The Department of Art History was founded in 1983, at which time there was only an undergraduate curriculum.^[10] A master degree program was set up in 2000 and the first doctoral degree program began in 2003. The Art History Department offers the following specialized courses for undergraduates: Painting Foundations, Design Foundations, Introduction to Art, Chinese Art, Foreign Art, Chinese Sculpture, Foreign Sculpture, Chinese Applied Arts, Foreign Applied Arts, Chinese Calligraphy, Ancient Chinese Mural Painting, Buddhist Art, Archaeology of Art Objects, Historical Materials on Chinese Crafts, Ancient Chinese Art Books and Records, Aesthetics of Chinese Applied Arts, Folk Art, Modern and Contemporary Chinese Art, Public Art, Historiography of Chinese Art, Selected Readings in Art and Design Theory, Modern Western Art and

Literary Theory, Aesthetics, Art Criticism, Editing and Specialized Writing.[11] Courses and research fields for postgraduates include: Mural Painting, Buddhist Art, Public Art, Costumes, Modern Chinese Art, History and Theory of Chinese and Foreign Fine Arts, History and Theory of Chinese and Foreign Applied Arts, Russian Art, Art Criticism, and Art Market. The faculty consists of ten professors, three associate professors, and two lecturers. In addition to teaching, they also conduct various research projects. The courses listed above betray two essential characteristics: first, there is a straight and sharp line between Chinese and foreign subject matter. Indeed, for almost three decades since the Art History Department was founded, all non-Chinese art – Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Medieval, Italian Renaissance, French Impressionist, German Expressionist, twentieth-century American, Japanese, Russian, African, etc. –, have been taught under the same overarching “Foreign” category. Second, there is an inclination towards art theory, art appreciation, criticism, and aesthetics. Meanwhile, faculty research areas reflect quite similar features. Of the fifteen art history faculty members, only three specialize in foreign subjects. They are: Zhang Gan, Professor and Vice Dean of the Academy of Arts & Design who is also the Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal *Tsinghua Arts*; Zhang Fuye, Professor and Head of the Department of Art History; and Chen Anying, Associate Professor. Zhang Gan’s fields include Western art history and visual culture, Christian art, and contemporary Chinese art criticism; Zhang Fuye’s research interests include history and theory of foreign art, foreign decorative arts, aesthetics and criticism of art and design; Chen Anying specializes in modern Western art, contemporary art and design, aesthetics, and visual culture studies.

Both Zhang Gan and Zhang Fuye’s courses on foreign art history cover the Renaissance. In the past five years, they have also been teaching core courses on the Renaissance. Such courses are organized into lecture series, titled collectively as “New Lectures in the Liberal

Arts”, and were launched in April 2005 as part of the University’s educational reform plan to strengthen liberal arts.[12] All undergraduates, regardless of their majors, are required to attend. The lectures are also open to the entire Tsinghua community. To host such a great audience, the lectures are delivered in the Grand Auditorium, thus paying homage to the vital humanistic spirit in Tsinghua’s early days. In 2009, Zhang Fuye gave a series of four lectures on Renaissance applied arts. Already in 2004, Zhang Gan’s course “Studies in Renaissance Art” had won the Second Prize of Excellent Teaching Achievement Awards of Tsinghua University. In spring 2011, Zhang Gan began to offer lecture series covering both important artistic centers of the Renaissance and stylistic periods from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. These lectures have been received with great enthusiasm. The topics constitute a total of 16 series:

1. Late Medieval Art (10 lectures)
2. Introduction to the History of Renaissance Art (7 lectures)
3. Early 14th-Century Sienese Art (6 lectures)
4. The Legacy of Masaccio and Early Renaissance Style (2 lectures)
5. Italian Early Renaissance Art of the 15th Century (10 lectures)
6. Early Renaissance Painters (4 lectures)
7. The Early Renaissance Style in Sculpture and Architecture (3 lectures)
8. Florentine Painting of the Mid-15th Century (6 lectures)
9. Renaissance Art in Central Italy (1 lecture)
10. Renaissance Art in Venice and Northern Italy (7 lectures)
11. The High Renaissance (4 lectures)
12. Florentine High Renaissance Art (5 lectures)
13. Roman High Renaissance Art (3 lectures)
14. Venetian Art: High Renaissance and Late Renaissance (5 lectures)
15. Michelangelo and Mannerism (2 lectures)
16. High Renaissance and Mannerism Art (6 lectures)

We may compare the content listed above to that of a survey course on Italian Renaissance Art taught in the Department of Art & Archaeology, Princeton University:

The Rebirth of the Arts in Italy:

Lecture 1: Introduction

Lecture 2: The Dawn of the Renaissance in Tuscany

Sacred into Secular: Expanded Functions of Art:

Lecture 3: The Early Sienese Tradition in Painting: Duccio, Simone Martini, the Lorenzetti

Lecture 4: Public Art in Early Quattrocento Florence: Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Donatello, Nanni di Banco

The Construction of the Visible World:

Lecture 5: New Definitions of Realism: Gentile da Fabriano, Masolino, and Masaccio

Lecture 6: The Heritage of Masaccio: Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi

Tradition and Innovation: Diversity within a Renaissance Style:

Lecture 7: Late Work of Ghiberti and Donatello; Alberti's *On Painting*

Lecture 8: An Ordered World: Uccello, Domenico Veneziano, Piero della Francesca

The Rise of the Medici:

Lecture 9: The Renaissance Tomb

Lecture 10: The Age of Lorenzo the Magnificent

The Other Italy:

Lecture 11: The Courts of Northern Italy: Pisanello and Mantegna

A New Synthesis: the High Renaissance in Florence:

Lecture 12: Leonardo da Vinci

Lecture 13: The Old Leonardo, the Young Michelangelo

The Renovation of Pope Julius II: High Renaissance Rome:

Lecture 14: Raphael and the Vatican Stanze

Lecture 15: Michelangelo, the Pope, and the Sistine Ceiling

The Elaboration of High Renaissance Classicism:

Lecture 16: Assimilation and Imitation: Late Raphael, Fra Bartolommeo

Lecture 17: Late Classicism and Early Mannerism: Andrea del Sarto, Pontormo, Rosso Fiorentino

Style and Meaning:

Lecture 18: A New Aesthetic Ideal: Correggio, Parmigianino, and Late Michelangelo

Lecture 19: Princely Patronage in Grand Ducal Florence

Venezianità: the Venetian-ness of Venetian Art:

Lecture 20: The Early Renaissance in Venice: the Bellini family, Carpaccio, and Painters of the Scuole

Lecture 21: A New Venetian Style: Giorgione and Titian

The Golden Age of Venetian Painting & Renaissance Self-fashioning:

Lecture 22: The High Renaissance in Venice: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto

Lecture 23: The Public and the Private: Modes of Definition^[13]

Viewed side by side, the Tsinghua course and its Princeton counterpart share essentially the same logic of presentation exhibited in two interwoven threads: the chronological and the geographical. Zhang Gan's lectures, together with the few given by Zhang Fuye, are the only Renaissance lectures offered by the Department of Art History. The focus is obviously the Italian Renaissance. Northern Renaissance has never been taught as an independent course, and Northern painters such as Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Hieronymus Bosch, Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, etc. are mentioned in the all-encompassing survey course of Foreign Art History. The same is true of Baroque art and later centuries, though nineteenth-century art sometimes constitutes a separate subject. It should also be pointed out that these Renaissance lectures, much in accordance with the approach used in general survey courses of

foreign art, craft, and design, still tend to treat the history of art as the development of a succession of stylistic periods and regard the artists as individual geniuses. A great deal of attention is directed towards the analysis, appreciation, and criticism of masterpieces of art, while social, political, and religious background of the Renaissance has not been sufficiently discussed, nor has such issue as art patronage. The audience is likely to accept “Early Renaissance”, “High Renaissance”, “Late Renaissance”, “Mannerism”, and “Baroque” as fixed stylistic terms, but rarely inquire about their origins and connotations.[14] Most of the students are not aware of the expression “early modern” that is sometimes used by Western historians as a substitute for the term Renaissance.

Nevertheless, Professor Zhang Gan’s courses on Renaissance art mark a significant step forward in the teaching of the Renaissance since Western art history began to appear in the curricula of Chinese universities and colleges. In China, with few exceptions, those who teach art history receive their doctorate from an art academy, and normally only art students are qualified for more advanced study in art history. As a matter of fact, in most art academies, the first-year curriculum is the same for both art studio majors and art majors. The educational background of Zhang, who attended the Central Academy of Fine Arts from the Bachelor of Arts through the Doctor of Arts level, epitomizes the path of most Chinese professors of art history. Upon receiving their doctorate, they would return to the same framework of art academies and teach the same audience of art students. The central point to study Western art history, in Zhang’s words, is to “provide a reference for the study of Chinese visual culture and its development, and to enrich the meaning of Chinese culture.” Zhang also states: “My main research interest is European Renaissance art and contemporary Western art. Meanwhile, my focus is the development trend and inherent rules of Western visual culture...” These ideas well characterize the approach and attitude of most art histo-

rians who trained in the Chinese educational system. On the other hand, those few art history professors who obtained their degrees abroad either studied East Asian art or modern and contemporary Western art, but none specializes in the Renaissance. Viewed in this context, Zhang Gan, who never studied overseas, is particularly admirable for his breadth of learning in Renaissance art.

Renaissance Teaching in the School of Architecture and Other Departments

In Europe and North America, it is common for art history departments to offer courses on architectural history. In American universities, Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque architectural history are in most cases taught by art history professors. But this is not the case in China, where art history courses are predominantly concerned with painting. Of the 80 or so Renaissance lectures given by Zhang Gan, for example, only three deal specifically with sculpture and architecture, and the sole architect mentioned is Brunelleschi. Michelangelo as an architect only receives a passing mention but in nowhere have his architectural works been analyzed. Bramante’s name is entirely missing even in those three lectures on Roman High Renaissance.

In fact, until now the only academic setting in Chinese universities where architectural history is taught is a school of architecture. And, similar to the situation in art academies, where almost all faculty members are artists or at least have a studio background, in architecture schools it is the architects who undertake the teaching of architectural history. Rather than being an independent scholarly discipline, it is a part of the training program for architects, and its mastery has only minimal relevance to a student’s success.[15]

Ever since its establishment in 1946, the School of Architecture at Tsinghua University has been regarded as the leading architectural school in China. Currently the School consists of

four departments: Architecture, Urban Planning, Landscape Architecture, and Building Science and Technology, each of which has its own research institutes. The Institute of Architectural History and Historical Conservation is one of the four research institutes under the Department of Architecture. As of 2012, the School of Architecture has a faculty of 107 members, of which nine work for the Institute. In addition to conducting research projects, they also teach architectural history courses and direct historic building surveys. Most faculty members are also involved in teaching undergraduate and graduate design studios. At least three professors have established their own design firms.

Of the nine members of the Architectural History Institute, four conduct research in Chinese architectural history and historic preservation. One professor, Lv Zhou, who now devotes himself fully to the conservation of cultural heritage, used to teach Western architectural history in the 1990s. His inviting lectures on Greek, Roman, Gothic, Renaissance, as well as Baroque and Rococo architecture inspired whole classes of young students. At the time, there was neither textbook on any particular historical period in European architecture, nor one covering its entire history from antiquity to the present.[16] Lv Zhou, like most of the other faculty members at the Institute, received his education in China from the B.Arch. through the Ph.D. level, and went abroad only later as a visiting scholar. In 1988, he visited the Sapienza University of Rome and attended the training program of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). From his sojourn in Italy and other European countries, Lv gained a firsthand knowledge of Italian architecture. Based on his travel diaries and reading notes, Lv delivered his lectures in a relaxed style yet at the same time presented the material with clear logic. He also drew handsome views, plans, and elevations to illustrate his discussion of buildings. It was in his lectures that most architecture students first heard such great names as Brunelleschi,

Bramante, the Sangallos, Palladio, Bernini, Borromini, etc., and learned various types of ancient monuments such as amphitheatre, baths, basilica, triumphal arch, and obelisk. Slide images were minimal, but already included some of the most important works in European architectural history, which immensely fascinated the students.[17]

Another professor, Liu Chang, has been teaching a third-year undergraduate course titled "Theories of Western Classical Architecture", which pays considerable attention to Vitruvius, Alberti, Palladio, and Serlio. Liu is versed in English, has reading knowledge of French and German, and his breadth of learning in both Chinese and Western art, architecture, and literature is remarkable. Starting this year, however, Liu decides to withdraw from teaching Western architecture and concentrate on Chinese architectural history and conservation.

Of the remaining three Institute members, two professors concern themselves with the comparison of Chinese and Western architecture, though both professors' specialization is still in the field of Chinese architectural history. One of them, Jia Jun, is the Director of Tsinghua's Architecture Library and also the Editor-in-Chief of *History of Architecture*, a prestigious journal published by Tsinghua University Press. Under Jia's directorship, the Architecture Library's collection of foreign language books on art and architecture has been greatly enriched. The majority of these books have not been translated into Chinese. Rather than serving as textbooks or research references, they remain a reading pleasure for the few Chinese students who are not only fluent in foreign languages but also have time to spare from their heavy studio assignments. The other professor, Wang Guixiang, teaches two courses concerning Western architecture: History of Western Architectural Theory, and Comparison of Architectural Culture between the East and the West, both of which are graduate courses. The former builds upon Liu Chang's course Theories of Western Classical Architecture and provides a more in-depth

discussion of Renaissance architectural theorists.[18] Since 1999, Wang has also translated the following books into Chinese: Peter Murray's *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance*, Hanno-Walter Kruft's *A History of Architectural Theory: from Vitruvius to the Present*, and Leon Battista Alberti's *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*.^[19] None of them has been used as textbook; instead, they become references for Chinese architect-scholars in their research pertaining to Western architecture.

So far, topics such as "Renaissance and Baroque Architecture" or "Architecture in the Age of the Humanism" have not been taught in Tsinghua's architecture school. Parallel to the situation in the Academy of Arts and Design, architectural history is divided into two overarching categories: Chinese and foreign, with the latter arbitrarily subdivided into History of Ancient Architecture and History of Modern Architecture. Renaissance architecture is treated in the "Ancient" course, though in a Western context Renaissance is neither "ancient" nor "modern". On the other hand, regardless of whether Chinese or foreign, the subject matter of any architectural history course is first of all buildings. The presentation sequence is always chronological, with major attentions directed towards the evolution of building form and style.^[20] Again, comparable to the approach to art history, contextual studies is not the concern of the mainstream educational system in China. Architecture students and art students alike are left with vivid visual impressions of European masterpieces but little understanding of Classicism, mythology, and Christianity which were interwoven in Renaissance art and architecture. It is ironic that in neither art history nor architectural history, historical background and its interpretation are systematically presented. Here we see two separations concerning the disciplinary structure in Chinese universities: on the one hand, architecture is separated from art, hence architectural history from art history, and on the other hand, the separation of history from both art and architecture.

Changes, however, are in the air. With the recruitment of two new members, both of whom received their Ph.D. abroad, the Institute of Architectural History and Historic Conservation has recently decided to offer the following new courses: Medieval architecture, Renaissance and Baroque architecture, and Western architecture from the nineteenth century to the present, all of which are to be taught in English. So far, consent has not been reached in regard to such matters as teaching methods, division of historical periods, and general scope as well as specific content of each course, but there is great potential in the Institute's plan to set up the first examples of specialized courses on Western architectural history among Chinese universities.^[21]

Outside the Academy of Arts and Design and the School of Architecture, there are two lecture series on the Renaissance: Medieval and Renaissance Art (6 lectures), and Late Renaissance Art (4 lectures), both of which belong to the "New Lectures in the Liberal Arts" series mentioned earlier. These lectures were given by Xiao Ying, a professor in the Department of Philosophy who also delivered two other lecture series on Western art: Classical Greek Architecture (4 lectures), and Classical Greek Art (17 lectures). Xiao received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Peking University and was a visiting professor in the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies, Bonn University, where he lectured on Chinese aesthetics and literature. Since 2000, Xiao has been teaching at Tsinghua University. His major research interests are aesthetics and contemporary Chinese culture, and so his approach to Western Classical and Renaissance art differs in some ways from that of Zhang Gan. Of the four books Xiao has published so far, two serve as standard textbooks for philosophy courses: *Aesthetics and Art Appreciation* (Higher Education Press, 2004) and *Introduction to Chinese and Western Art* (Peking University Press, 2005). The latter won the Excellent Textbooks on Higher Education Prize awarded by Beijing Municipal Government in 2006.^[22]

Renaissance Materials in the University Library

A few words remain to be said about Renaissance materials represented in the Tsinghua University Library. Tsinghua's library system includes the university library, six subject branch libraries, and more than ten school or department reading rooms. The six branch libraries are: Architecture Library, Arts Library, Economics and Management Library, Humanities & Social Sciences Library, Law Library, and Medicine and Life Science Library. In neither the Architecture Library nor the Arts Library is there a special collection on the Renaissance. But if one searches "Renaissance" by keyword on Tsinghua University Library's online catalogue, it would return no less than 700 most relevant entries. For university librarians in Europe and North America this would seem too small a number to be worth mentioning. But in China, where Renaissance studies has scarcely been established, these 700 or so books represent a remarkable university collection. Indeed, a skim of these titles reveals a fairly rich variety of subjects (see Appendix for a list of books in Renaissance studies acquired by Tsinghua University Library during the past two years). Meanwhile, it should be noted that these books have not been systematically categorized. For example, *Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and the Renaissance in Florence* is in the Architecture Library; Kenneth Clark's *Leonardo da Vinci* is in the Humanities & Social Sciences Library, so is Luciano Bellosi's *Giotto*. In fact a considerable number of art history books are not found in the Art Library. Again, this reflects the disconnection of art history from humanities. The Art Library seems to be more inclined to collect art books in which images prevail over texts, so that art students may use them as a direct visual reference without being bothered by scholarly interpretations. After all, the essential function of an art academy is to train artists rather than art historians.

At the same time, one should not overlook the

fact that the 700 or so books also include some old titles, for example F. Mason Perkins's biography of Giotto published in 1902. These books were acquired in the 1920s and 1930s when Tsinghua University and its aspiring scholars were actively engaged in introducing the essence of Western civilization to China.

Conclusion

Today, while Renaissance teaching and study appear to decline in the West as a result of a broader crisis of liberal arts education, it does have a chance to develop in China, paradoxically because it has not yet been established in the Chinese academic system. It is true that in China it is predominantly artists and architects who teach history of art and architecture. T. S. Eliot once said that "the poet, when he talks or writes about poetry, has peculiar qualifications and peculiar limitations..."[23] And we may as well apply this statement to the artists and architects talking about art and architecture. Chinese scholars' approach to Renaissance visual culture, as has already been mentioned more than once, is still inclined towards formal-stylistic analysis and appreciation, which may be considered out-of-date by some Western scholars. But the intent here is not criticism of their limitations. From a more constructive perspective the methods adopted by Chinese scholars may well be their strength. For, on the one hand, their ideas and methods accord well with the way Chinese scholars have studied their own visual culture. The time-honored literati tradition which values, at one and the same time, the criticism of art and its perfection continues to be cherished by every educated man. On the other hand, such ideas and methods have been successful in presenting to the Chinese audience the great achievements of the Renaissance in a vivid rather than abstract manner. This kind of first impression is important, and instrumental, as it provides direct incentives for the audience to learn more about the Renaissance and other significant episodes in Western civilization. It lays a

solid foundation for the introduction of various reflections on and approaches to the Renaissance, ideas which have occurred and are still occurring in the West. When the time is ripe, the marrying of Chinese and Western thoughts of the Renaissance will bear new fruits.

Appendix

Select books in Renaissance studies acquired by Tsinghua University Library between 2010-2011

James E. Shaw and Evelyn Welch, *Making and Marketing Medicine in Renaissance Florence*, Amsterdam / New York 2011

Carl Becker, *Decorative Arts from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Cologne 2011

Peter Mack, *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric 1380-1620*, Oxford / New York 2011

Courts and Courtly Arts in Renaissance Italy. Art, Culture and Politics, 1395-1530, ed. Marco Folin, Woodbridge 2011

Nandini Das, *Renaissance Romance. The Transformation of English Prose Fiction, 1570-1620*, Burlington 2011

Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theories. Anglo-Italian Transactions, ed. Michele Marrapodi, Burlington 2011

Robert C. Davis, *Renaissance People. Lives that Shaped the Modern Age*, Los Angeles 2011

Sonia Servida, *The Story of Renaissance Architecture*, Munich / New York 2011

Peter and Linda Murray, *The Art of the Renaissance*, London 2010

Stefano Zuffi, *How to Read Italian Renaissance Painting*, New York 2010

Catherine Bates, *Masculinity, Gender and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric*, Cambridge / New York 2010

Music Education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. Russell E. Murray, Jr., Susan Forscher Weiss, and Cyn-

thia J. Cyrus, Bloomington 2010

Renaissance Food from Rabelais to Shakespeare. Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories, ed. Joan Fitzpatrick, Burlington 2010

François Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art*, London 2010

The 100 Most Influential Painters and Sculptors of the Renaissance, ed. Kathleen Kuiper, New York 2010

Humanismus und Renaissance in Augsburg. Kulturgeschichte einer Stadt zwischen Spätmittelalter und Dreißigjährigem Krieg, ed. Gernot Michael Müller, Berlin 2010

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Italian Renaissance Ceramics. A Catalogue of the British Museum Collection, ed. Dora Thornton and Timothy Wilson, London 2009

Brian Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth. Reincarnation in Early Modern Italian Kabbalah*, Leiden / Boston 2009

Sharon T. Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries in Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore 2009

Endnotes

1. As stated in a New York Times article on the occasion of Tsinghua's Centennial Celebration, "For nearly 300 years, the European Enlightenment was the intellectual and moral source of change, if not legitimacy, for mankind. Yet the tidal wave of Westernization also brought about – along with the glory of economic and technological transformation – confusion, defeatism and even catastrophe to non-Western civilizations." Eric Li, *Where the East Parts From the West*, in: New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/28/opinion/28iht-edli28.html?pagewanted=all>, 25-07-2012.
2. Both the Grand Auditorium and the Main Library, important landmark buildings of Tsinghua University, were designed by the American architect Henry Killam Murphy (1877-1954), whose campus planning in the early 1920s largely defined Tsinghua's architectural style. Murphy cherished traditional Chinese architectural styles while at the same time attempted to adapt them to modern uses. He was an advocate of "an architectural Renaissance in China." See Jeffrey W. Cody, *Building in China: Henry K. Murphy's "Adaptive Architecture," 1914-1935*, Hong Kong 2001.
3. Following the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901), a movement in resistance to foreign imperialism and Christianity in China, the defeated Qing Dynasty was fined an indemnification of around 333 million U.S. Dollars for the loss caused to the Eight-Nation Alliance, of which the United States share was 7.32%. When Liang Cheng, the Qing representative to the U.S., learned that the \$30 million plus indemnity paid to the United States was excessive, he initiated a campaign to pressure the U.S. into returning the \$10.8 million difference to China. In 1909, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt obtained congressional approval to use the difference as a fund for Chinese students to study in the U.S., and so The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship was established. It has been called "the most important scheme for educating Chinese students in America and arguably the most consequential and successful in the entire foreign-study movement of twentieth century China." See Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States*, Stanford 2001, and Michael H. Hunt, *The American Remission of the Boxer Indemnity: A Reappraisal*, in: *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 31 no. 3, 1972, p. 539-559.
4. Wang Guowei studied natural sciences in Tokyo; Chen Yinke obtained a scholarship to go to Europe, first studying at Berlin University, then at the University of Zurich and Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, and later studied Sanskrit at Harvard University; with a Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, Zhao Yuanren went to the United States in 1910 to study mathematics and physics at Cornell University, and later earned his doctorate in philosophy from Harvard University; Liang Qichao did not attend any university abroad but his extensive visits to Japan, Canada, and the United States in the 1900s to 1910s largely exposed him to modern Western thoughts. Chen and Zhao also demonstrated formidable language skills: the latter was fluent in German and French, knew Japanese fairly well, and had reading knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin, while the former had command of several oriental languages in addition to his mastery of English, French, German, Latin, and Greek.
5. Fu formulated his own style and theory through his highly acclaimed translations of Voltaire and Balzac. He was also the first to translate Romain Rolland's *Vie de Michel-Ange* into Chinese. Before taking up translations, Fu worked first as a journalist and art critic. In 1934, he gave 20 lectures on world masterpieces of art, which were received with great enthusiasm and were soon published collectively. In his lectures Fu assigned a considerable part to the Renaissance. Indeed it was Fu who first interpreted the French term "re-naissance" in a Chinese context. He treated his subjects in an elegant, inviting prose style that seamlessly fuses historical inquiry, fresh observation, as well as criticism and appreciation.
6. In response to Mao Zedong's call, the higher educational system in China simulated the socialist Soviet model in all respects from administration to curriculum design, teaching methods, and textbooks. Based on Soviet experience, the First Five-year Plan (1953-1958) emphasized the development of heavy industry, hence the focus on technical education. Soviet experts replaced Europeans and Americans to serve in Chinese universities and colleges. For more details, see Yang Rui, *Toward Massification: Higher Education Development in the People's Republic of China since 1949*, in: *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, vol. XIX, 2004, p. 311-374.
7. Today, disciplinary restructuring continues in Tsinghua and many other universities in China, though to a lesser extent. The best teaching that Tsinghua can offer may still be in engineering, but overall, the University's efforts in pursuing high academic standards in the arts, humanities, and social sciences are commendable.
8. Among Chinese universities, the first academic programs in the arts that are independent from the art academy system are those of the School of Arts of Peking University, founded in January 2006. Its present dean, Dr. Ye Lang, is a renowned aesthetician and senior professor of philosophy and social sciences. The greatest rival of Tsinghua, Peking University, owes its long tradition of aesthetic and art education to Cai Yuanpei (1858-1940), one of the most influential educators in China's modern history and the president of Peking University from 1917 to 1927. During his tenure, Cai advocated the idea of "replacing religion with aesthetic education", gave aesthetics courses in person, organized arts societies, and engaged a galaxy of famous modern artists, many of which had studied in Europe. Growing out of the Teaching & Research Section of arts established in 1986 and Department of Art Studies set up in 1997, today's School of Arts of Peking University consists of four departments: Art Studies, Musicology, Fine Arts, and Movie & Television. It offers three Bachelor of Arts programs, three Master of Arts programs, two Master of Fine Arts programs, and one Ph.D. program. Masterpieces appreciation and aesthetics constitute the core of the School's curriculum. None of the 22 faculty members conducts research in Renaissance studies or teaches special topics in Renaissance art. Parallel to the association of art history (or art studies) with art academies, musicology is almost always allied with a music conservatory. The Department of Musicology at Peking University is a rare exception. It offers courses on Western music history, including such topic as "Romantic Music", but there is no special topic concerning Renaissance music. So far the

- only course on Renaissance music that I know of is a series of eight lectures given by Meng Guanglin, a professor and violinist in the School of Music, Hangzhou Normal University.
9. The Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) was founded in the same social-political context. In April 1950, the National Beiping Art College and the Fine Arts Department of Huabei University were incorporated to form the Central Academy of Fine Arts. The former's roots can be traced back to the National Beijing Art College (founded in 1918 under the initiative of the renowned educationist Cai Yuanpei), which was the first national art education institution in Chinese history and marked the beginning of modern art education in China. Today the Central Academy of Fine Arts has six schools and one college: School of Fine Arts, School of Chinese Painting, School of Humanities, School of Design, School of Architecture, and School of City Design. The School of Humanities was set up in 2003, the predecessor of which was the Academy's Art History Department founded in 1956. Despite its designation, the School of Humanities does not contain any humanities fields other than the history of visual arts.
 10. The other departments are: Ceramic Design, Textile and Fashion Design, Arts and Crafts, Sculpture, Painting, Information Art and Design, Environmental Art and Design, Visual Communication, and Industrial Design.
 11. The Chinese term *Meishu kaogu xue*, literally translated as "archaeology of fine arts" though referring to "archaeology of art objects", originated from German instead of English. It was first introduced to China by Guo Moruo (1892-1978), a distinguished poet, historian, and archaeologist. In 1929, based on a Japanese archaeologist's translation of Adolf Michaelis's *Ein Jahrhundert Kunstarchäologischer Entdeckungen* (Leipzig 1908), Guo rendered the German author's work into Chinese. The full meaning of the German word *Kunstarchäologie* was maintained in the Japanese translation, and so in the Chinese one. Following the publication of Guo's translation, archaeology of art objects was gradually established in China as a special field of archaeology.
 12. These core courses are divided into eight branches: Philosophy and Human Life; History and Culture; Languages and Literature; Art and Aesthetics; Science-Technology and Society; Modern China in the Global Context; Social Sciences; and Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Each undergraduate should take at least three core courses, to be selected from at least two branches.
 13. I thank Patricia Fortini Brown, Professor Emeritus and formerly chair of the Department of Art & Archaeology, Princeton University, for sharing her syllabus of Renaissance art, a course that she had taught for many years at Princeton.
 14. Professor Chen Chiyu of the Art History Department has informed me that when teaching Western art history in China, the most frequently cited Western authors are Heinrich Wölfflin, E. H. Gombrich, and Erwin Panofsky, in that order. Beginning in the 1980s, these authors' major works have been translated into Chinese. The first Chinese version of Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der Neueren Kunst* appeared in 1987 and is still deemed the canon of Western art history.
 15. Tsinghua's School of Architecture offers two undergraduate programs: a four-year program leading to the Bachelor of Engineering and a five-year one leading to the Bachelor of Architecture. The curriculum of the five-year program requires 200 credits at least, including 155 for courses, 30 for practice, and 15 for thesis. In academic year 2011-2012, undergraduates majoring in architectural design were required to take 9 credits of architectural history and theory, chosen from only six courses: History of World Ancient Architecture (2 credits); History of Chinese Ancient Architecture (2 credits); History of World Modern Architecture (2 credits); History of Chinese Modern Architecture (2 credits); Vernacular Architecture (1 credit); and Theories of Western Classic Architecture (1 credit). In comparison, other requirements include: 52 credits of design studio, 15 credits of architectural design theory, 9 credits of urban planning and landscape theory, 8 credits of building science and technology, 18 credits of visual arts courses comprising drawing, watercolor, masonry, wood-carving, and architectural decoration. These are in addition to general requirements in gym, foreign language, military service, higher mathematics, as well as "humanities" which include readings of Mao, Marx, or Deng Xiaoping, Chinese Military Theory, Chinese Classical Thought, Chinese Jurisprudence, and Environmental Protection.
 16. The only textbooks available at the time were: *Wai guo jian zhu shi* (*A History of World Architecture: before the end of the 19th century*) and *Wai guo jin xian dai jian zhu shi* (*A History of World Architecture: from the end of the 19th century to contemporary*), both published by China Building Bookshop. Chen Zhihua, author of the former, is a renowned architectural historian and Professor Emeritus of School of Architecture, Tsinghua University, while Luo Xiaowei, author of the latter, has been teaching Western architectural history at Tongji University in Shanghai since the 1960s. Both books have been revised several times and are still used in China's architectural schools as the most authoritative textbooks on Western architectural history.
 17. I owe a special debt to Lv Zhou, whose memorable lectures first inducted me into the world of Renaissance architecture.
 18. Both Liu Chang and Wang Guixiang have asked me to take over their courses on Western architectural history. Starting next academic year, Liu's "Theories of Western Classical Architecture" and Wang's "History of Western Architectural Theory" will merge to form one single course for senior undergraduates and first-year graduates. So far all history and theory courses have been taught in the form of lectures, with neither reading nor class discussion. I expect to bring in some changes by teaching more Western style seminars.
 19. They were published by China Building Bookshop in 1999, 2005, and 2009, respectively. In collaboration with three other members of the Institute of Architectural History and Historic Conservation, Wang Guixiang also translated Marvin Trachtenberg's *Architecture: from Prehistory to Postmodernity*, which was published by China Machine Press in 2011. Professor Wang's aim is to set up a translation team composed of members familiar with the architectural culture both of China and the West. The team is expected to translate one excellent book on Western architectural history every two years. Earlier this

year, I brought to Wang's attention that such important books as James Ackerman's *Palladio* and *The Architecture of Michelangelo* have never been printed in Chinese, and proposed to start working on their translation immediately. Professor Wang expressed his concern that scholarly books of this kind might not attract the commercial interest of most Chinese publishing houses, with which he is by now quite familiar. Instead, in his selection of foreign books for translation and publication, Wang prefers architectural theory studies over contextual ones, and general surveys over monographs. Nonetheless, he encourages me to take up the translation of *Palladio*, and has been trying to locate potential publishers.

20. The methodology for studying Chinese historic buildings was founded by Liang Sicheng and is still practiced today. Liang began studying Western architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. During this period, his father, the erudite thinker Liang Qichao, sent him a copy of *Yingzhao Fashi* (translated as "State Building Standards"), a classical treatise on Chinese construction methods written by an official-scholar in 1103. The role this treatise has played in Chinese architectural history is comparable to that of Vitruvius's *Ten Books on Architecture* in the West. Like the Vitruvian text, *Yingzhao Fashi* is full of difficult terms, and Liang made great efforts to illustrate them. He then identified the names of buildings mentioned in the treatise and other historical records. Once back in China, he traveled to the countryside to search those buildings, measured them thoroughly, and wrote about his findings. Since Liang's fieldwork in the 1930s, many of the oldest buildings he studied were destroyed in the following decades of wars and social turmoil. Today, following Liang's path, architectural history education in China is essentially about the identification and dating of old buildings, their restoration or preservation, and, in some cases, the design of buildings in imitation of classical styles. Liang's life and work have been very well studied, and, wherever his architectural background is related, the focus is always the École des Beaux-Arts kind of education that he received at the University of Pennsylvania. But the curriculum of the École des Beaux-Arts developed from specialized academies in eighteenth-century Italy and France such as the Roman Academy of Saint Luke, the precedents of which can be found in Renaissance Florence and Rome. Besides, Liang's methodology and fieldwork bring to mind the ambitious projects conducted by Raphael and other Renaissance artists, architects, and humanistic scholars in the survey and preservation of ancient Roman monuments. These and other connections between the methods established by Liang in China and those practiced by Renaissance architects in sixteenth-century Italy are particularly intriguing. I will deal with these matters in a separate article.

21. Qing Feng, who obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh in 2009, joined the School of Architecture faculty in 2011 and is now preparing an English course on Western architecture from the 19th century to the present day. I am responsible for an English course on European architecture, beginning with the late medieval period and concluding where Qing Feng would pick up. Both courses will be taught in the spring semester of 2013. In addition to reading assignments and class dis-

cussion, I have prepared a series of twelve lectures: (1) Brunelleschi and the Early Renaissance; (2) The Ideal City in Theory and Practice; (3) Bramante and the High Renaissance in Rome; (4) Michelangelo and Mannerism; (5) Palladio; (6) Roman Baroque Masters: Maderno, Borromini, and Bernini; (7) 17th- and 18th-Century Centers: Venice, Turin, and Rome; (8) Renaissance Architecture in France and Spain; (9) France: Baroque and Rococo; (10) England: from Inigo Jones to Christopher Wren; (11) The Palladian Revival; (12) 18th-Century Architecture in Central Europe. Since the lectures will be addressed to a Chinese audience, most of which have never been exposed to Western architecture, I have tried to come up with a reasonable outline. Still, to what extent the students may absorb the course's content remains to be tested.

22. Over the past two years, Renaissance teaching in other Chinese institutions has also begun to display various approaches. As far as I know, Zhu Xiaoyuan, a history professor at Peking University, gave the following lecture series in 2010: Introduction to the Renaissance (4 lectures), The Rise of Creative Energies in the Renaissance (4 lectures); European Courts in the Renaissance (3 lectures); The Civilization of the Renaissance (16 lectures); Renaissance and the Reflection on Western Civilization (8 lectures); and The Legacy of the Renaissance (5 lectures). At People's University of China, He Guanghu, Professor of philosophy, lectured on Christianity and Renaissance Humanism, while Meng Guanglin, Professor of history, delivered the following series: The Development of Political Thought in Renaissance Europe (17 lectures); Renaissance Antiquarian Studies (9 lectures); and Reflections on Renaissance Studies (2 lectures). At the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Dr. Guo Hongmei gave a lecture titled "The Representation of Madonna in Renaissance Art and Its Relation to the Social Conception of Women". These lectures, however, remain isolated cases outside the scope of the art academies' curricula in art history, which still largely retain a teaching method of chronological presentation and stylistic description.
23. *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode, New York 1975, p. 107.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Courtesy Li Luke

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